Shifting Sands: Analyzing the Evolving Rural Occupational Landscape of Ajmer District, Rajasthan

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Abstract

This study investigates the rural occupational structure of Ajmer district of Rajasthan. The research looks into the distribution of labour within several areas, including agriculture, industry, and services. From the use of secondary data from the 2011 India census, the predominance of agriculture in the rural economy is revealed while acknowledging swings toward non-agricultural activities which is mainly influenced by urbanization and government interventions. The workforce clearly split by gender, with males working in jobs that pay more and women mostly hired for lower-paying positions. This study provides information about the socioeconomic background of the Ajmer district, showing the need for policy makers to step in and encourage rural growth. The results clearly make a way to understand rural livelihoods and the policy makers can easily utilise these for a better rural transformation.

***Keywords:** Rural working structure, gender inequalities, agriculture, non-agricultural engagement.*

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INTRODUCTION

The occupational structure in rural India is a perilous feature of understanding the country's development path. In spite of substantial economic growth, rural areas still face challenges in terms of employment prospects and livelihood sustenance. In India where a large mass of its population resides in rural areas, understanding rural occupations is extremely important for making good policies to boost rural growth and reduce poverty.

This study focuses on the rural occupational structure of Ajmer district, concentrating on the distribution of labour within various occupations. By critically examining the occupational tendencies, this work pursues to make a deeper understanding of the socio-economic conditions in Ajmer's rural areas and propose perceptions for the government bodies aiming to boost the income prospects for the rural people.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Occupational structure has been a curiosity for social scientists since ages and its proper understanding makes planning development plans easier. The Indian scholars are also interested in this topic and major studies were undertaken across India only after independence. The initial studies in India had a colonial impact on them which gradually faded and the focus of such studies shifted to access the discrepancies and inequalities by sex among various occupations. Initially the females

were limited to household activities, this trend is changing now. It is especially due to spread of education and urbanisation.

Indian economy has always been an agrarian economy and after independence, the primary focus of the new government was to feed the nation as well as putting the country on the development track. For this India brought the concept of five-year plans that laid focus on various sectors and also boosted industrialisation. Dharma Kumar (1982) and Irfan Habib (1963) are two scholars who were among the first few academicians undertaking studies on occupational structure but their study was primarily focussed on colonial period.

V.M. Dandekar and Nilkanth Rath in 1971 were the first scholars who used the national sample survey for their study and accessed the basis of poverty line. They actually studied poverty but at the same time they also touched diversification of occupations. M.N. Srinivas (1966) in his book social change in modern India studied various aspects of Indian society and how they were shaping the development of free India. A.R. Desai (1979) in his work on peasant struggles in India, focussed on the problems faced by the agrarian workers and how this was affecting the occupational scenario. K.P. Kannan (2002) research was basically limited to Kerala's occupational structure and their gulf connection. Amitabh Kundu (2007) analysed the work force in urban centres of India and how the migration to cities is changing the occupational profile.

Bina Agarwal (1994) was among the front runners to study the women's role in jobs and how they are discriminated in property, while Devaki Jain (2005) highlighted the role of United Nations in changing the condition of women and empowering them to leadership. BIMARU member states like Rajasthan, Odisha, and Bihar were the most backward states of India and are of mainly agrarian economy. The transformation of land holdings and government policies have led to diverse complex occupational structure and is a good subject to study the comparisons.

For instance, Yadav and Khan's (2012) research provided a detailed investigation of the occupational structure in Hadauti (a region in South-eastern Rajasthan) covering its 15 tehsils and how the migration is changing its occupational structure, while Yadav's (2020) study explored the environmental impact of the livestock economy in the same region where development of canal infrastructure and technological advancements in science has transformed the economic landscape of the area. More recently, Khan et al.'s (2021) research has continued their curiosity, offering fresh insights into the Hadauti region's unique challenges and opportunities in job creation and its structure.

The overabundance of such studies on India's occupational structure brings useful data to government authorities. It stresses the persistent need for particular inventiveness to encourage non-agricultural employment in rural areas.

OBJECTIVES

This study explores into the rural occupational setting of Ajmer district, looking for exposing the particulars of the current job scenario. Our main objectives are:

1. Labour Force Mapping: We aim highlight a bright picture of how the rural workforce is distributed across various sectors and determine the main occupations with a large share of workers in the district.

2. Uncovering Influential Factors: To discover the complex chemistry of socio-economic, geographical, and policy-related factors that outline occupational choices and transitions among the rural population of Ajmer district.

3. Provide Policy Recommendations: Ultimately, our research pursues providing actionable insights and policy recommendations that can help create better employment opportunities, promote rural livelihoods, and substitute sustainable economic growth in the district.

METHODOLOGY

The current study is based on secondary data because primary data in such studies don't provide accuracy. Data was taken from various government offices and through various statistical handbook of Ajmer, Census of India, Primary census abstract 2011 etc. The use of data from internet like archives news were also incorporated in the study. 9 tehsils are included in this analysis because the current paper's emphasis is on the district's occupational structure at the tehsil level. The data was interpreted by tables and maps. Arc map software was used to draw maps and then interpreted.

STUDY AREA

Ajmer district is centrally located in Rajasthan and is neighboured by Tonk and Jaipur district in the East and Pali in the West. Bhilwara district is in the South while Nagaur district neighbours its north boundary. The district is triangular in shape. The geographical parameters of its location are that it lies between 26025l North to 26029l North latitudes and 74037l East to 74042l East longitudes. Area of Ajmer district is 8481.40sq. Kms. Ajmer is divided into 9 tehsils Ajmer, Peesangan, Kekri, Beawar, Masuda, Nasirabad, Bhinay, Kishangarh, and Sarwar. Ajmer district had a population of 2,583,052 in 2011. Rural and urban population of the district was 1,547,642 and 1,035,410 people respectively. The major urban areas of the district are Ajmer, Beawar, Kishangarh, Pushkar, Kekri, Nasirabad and Vijainagar.

The average population across tehsils is approximately 171,960, with the highest population in Kishangarh (263,345) and the lowest in the least populated tehsil Sarwar. Male and female populations are relatively balanced, with an average of around 87,710 males and 84,249 females.

ANALYSIS

The northern and southwestern regions of Ajmer district have the highest concentration of rural households, with more than 42,000 households (Map 1). These areas are represented with the darkest shading. The central and some southeastern regions have a moderate concentration, with 34,000 to 42,000 households. The eastern region of Ajmer has between 26,000 and 34,000 households, as indicated by the lighter horizontal lines. Some areas, particularly the central part of the district, have the least number of households, less than 26,000 represented by the lightest shading. This map

provides a clear spatial distribution of rural households across the Ajmer district. The concentration of households could be influenced by various factors such as agricultural productivity,
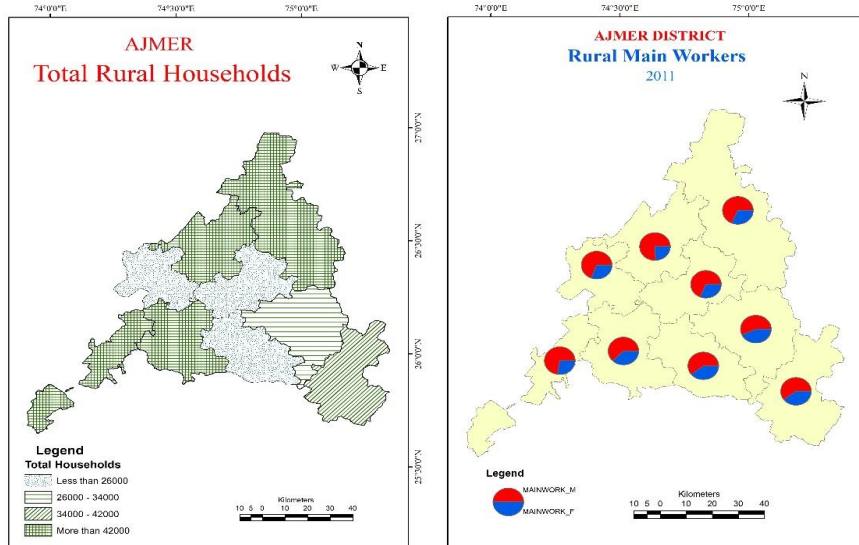
availability of resources, and proximity to urban centres. The areas with higher household numbers might have better access to resources and infrastructure, which could influence the occupational structure of the region, an important factor to consider in your research on the rural occupational structure of Ajmer district.

The map 2 shows the distribution of main workers in the rural areas of Ajmer district. The data has been depicted by pie diagram overlaying the tehsils with male workers shown in red and the female workers are shown by blue colour in the pie. The map shows that throughout the region male workers are outnumbering the female workers. The share of female workers varies from one part to another. The southern parts of Ajmer have higher female participation compared to the other parts of the district.

Table 1 Ajmer District: Rural Occupational Structure 2011

Tehsil	Pop.	Main workers		Cultivators		Agri. Labour		House hold		Other		Marginal		Non worker	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Kishangarh	263345	61286	28152	25633	16904	5092	5520	920	473	29641	5255	9097	23326	64731	76753
Ajmer	220616	48338	15548	10885	5622	5155	3928	1094	546	31204	5452	7950	13606	57345	77829
Peesangan	127803	26950	11974	10472	5265	3790	3770	905	467	11783	2472	7161	12649	30964	38105
Beawar	191783	32601	12301	8153	5828	2402	2088	717	294	21329	4091	12889	21786	50976	61230
Masuda	185713	41297	24698	17787	14795	4549	4936	700	493	18261	4474	8244	16613	45661	49200
Nasirabad	136682	30530	13767	10309	6595	2592	3618	666	401	16963	3153	5774	13411	33585	39615
Bhinay	149959	35829	23474	20328	16411	3625	3994	736	255	11140	2814	5150	11309	35133	39064
Sarwar	110873	28061	21335	17193	14274	2927	4572	377	142	7564	2347	3007	6727	25242	26501
Kekri	160868	36021	23876	19474	15259	5334	6168	627	213	10586	2236	6320	12402	39255	42994

The domination of males is visible throughout the area, which echo social, cultural, or economic factors that restrict female participation in the workforce. For understanding these inequalities, it is crucial to examine the occupational structure of Ajmer and plan policies to improve gender equity. This will help policy makers to formulate plans to encourage higher female participation as workers in rural areas. The average number of main male and female workers is around 37,879 and 19,458 respectively. Kishangarh has the highest number of male and female main workers, again pointing to a significant gender inequality in the main workforce, with males constantly dominating females.

The map 3 delivers a clear depiction of gender inequalities in cultivators within the rural areas of Ajmer district. On average, there are about male and female cultivators 15,581 and 11,217 respectively. The highest numbers are in Kishangarh and the lowest are in Beawar tehsil as it has a rugged mountainous topography and the workers are engaged in industries and mining activities.

However, the presence of female cultivators in all regions indicates that women contribute to agricultural activities, though not as the primary labour force. These insights are important for understanding the dynamics of rural occupational structure in Ajmer, particularly in the context of gender roles and labour distribution in agriculture. Female cultivators are more in Kekri, Bhinay, Sarwar and Masooda tehsils than other tehsils of the district. These areas are predominantly dependent on agriculture as their livelihood.

The average number of male agricultural labourers is 3,941, while females number around 4,288. The distribution is fairly even across tehsils (Map 4). The slightly higher number of female agricultural labourers suggests a more significant role of women in agricultural labour.

Household work involves fewer individuals, with an average of 749 males and 365 females per tehsil. This category (Map 5) sees the least participation overall, reflecting its marginal contribution to the occupational structure.

Other workers make up a substantial portion of the workforce, with an average of 17,608 males and 3,588 females. The largest numbers are seen in Ajmer tehsil. This suggests that many tehsils have diverse occupational activities beyond agriculture. Marginal workers, those who do not work full-time, average 7,288 males and 14,648 females. Females are more likely to be marginal workers, indicating potential underemployment or seasonal work.

A significant portion of the population falls into the non-worker category, with an average of 42,543 males and 50,143 females. This highlights the reliance on non-working populations in many tehsils, possibly due to socio-economic factors.
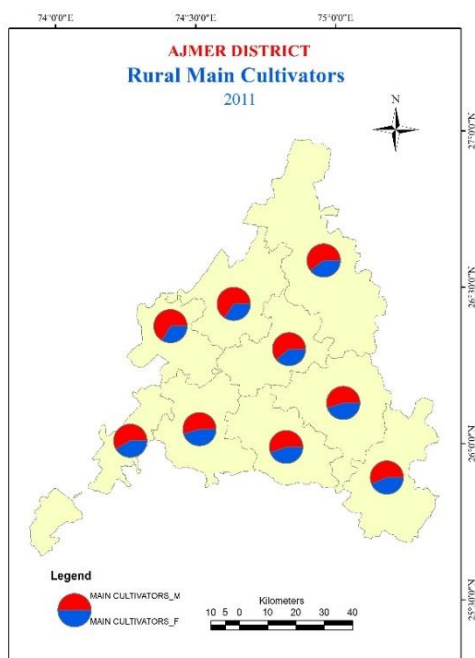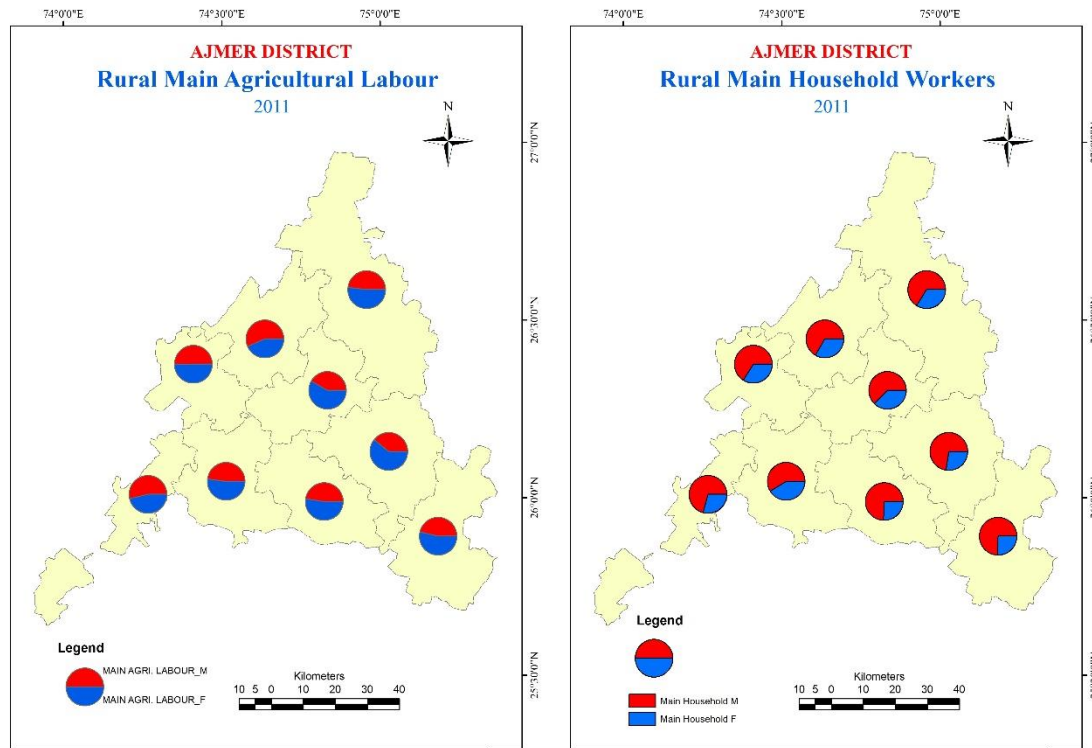
There is marked inequalities in all occupational categories, with males leading the main and other workers, and the females are more conspicuous in marginal and non-working groups. Kishangarh and Ajmer both being big urban centres stand out with higher populations and more expanded occupational structures. In spite of the importance of agriculture, the geography of the region that is no perennial river and scanty rainfall, the number of cultivators and agricultural labourers is lower than expected, signifying a shift towards other forms of employment. This research can surely work as a substance for further examination into the socio-economic factors driving these occupational drifts in Ajmer district.

CONCLUSION

The rural occupational pattern of Ajmer echoes a multifaceted chemistry of traditional agricultural methods and emerging new non-agricultural openings. To create a prosperous rural economy in Ajmer district, we recommend the following strategies for the government agencies to look at:

1. Unlocking New Opportunities: While farming remains the mainstay of the rural economy, it's optimistic to see a shift towards non-agricultural sectors in areas with good infrastructure. Let's nurture this drift by sponsoring rural industrialization and small-scale start-ups, creating a more diverse economy.

2. Empowering Women: The conspicuous gender gap in the workforce require attention. We need policies that boost women to join the formal workforce, provide them with skills training, and ensure safety with equal access to resources. This will help tie the gender gap and unlock the full potential of our rural communities.

3. Skills for a Changing World: As the rural economy progresses, education and vocational training become essential. Let the policy makers invest in programs that equip people with the skills to prosper in emerging sectors like services and technology, ensuring that they are also a part of the mainstream.

4. Supporting the Most Vulnerable: A substantial portion of the rural population is involved in marginal work, indicating a persistent need for stable, full-time employment opportunities. In regions of high levels of marginal labour, we must create involvements that provide economic security and stability.

5. Building Foundations for Growth: Improved infrastructure is a reagent for economic growth. Investing in rural roads, electricity, and digital connectivity can stimulate economic activities, attract new industries, and create a more varied occupational scenario.

6. Sustainable Agriculture for a Brighter Future: While expanding the economy, let's not forget the importance of sustainable agriculture. By supporting methods that boost yield, ensure food security, and provide stable livelihoods for farmers, we can create a more sustainable future for all.

By overcoming these areas, we can pave the way for comprehensive and sustainable rural development in Ajmer district, ensuring economic growth paybacks every segment of the population.

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